

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

Summary

1. A computer-implemented method of retrieving product distribution information comprising:
 - (a) storing first relationship information and second relationship information, said relationship information identifying a buyer, a seller and a product to be provided from said seller to said buyer,
 - (b) said first relationship information identifying a first entity as said buyer, a second entity as said seller, and a first product as said product,
 - (c) said second relationship information identifying said second entity as said buyer, a third entity as said seller, and said first product as said product,
 - (d) retrieving said first relationship information,
 - (e) retrieving said second relationship information based on the identity of said seller and the identity of said product contained in said first relationship information.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of storing third relationship information identifying said third entity as said buyer, a fourth entity as said seller, and said first product as said
5 product.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein said product
~~is a stamp.~~

10 *Drain* 4. The method of claim 1 wherein said first product is a part of a second product and said first relationship identifies a second product containing said
~~part.~~

15 5. The method of claim 1 wherein said product is a service or a product and a service.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein said steps of storing relationship information further comprises
20 storing the compensation which seller agrees to accept for said product from said buyer.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein said compensation is the price of the product.

00659977 004400

8. The method of claim 7 wherein said compensation is a commission.

Rule 5, 26

⁹
~~1~~ 9. The method of claim 1 wherein said first entity is a class of entities.

¹⁰
~~1~~ 10. The method of claim 7 wherein said class is the general public.

10

¹¹
~~1~~ 11. The method of claim 7 wherein said step of retrieving said first relationship information comprises displaying to said first entity at least two products associated with those relationships identifying said first entity as said buyer, and determining said first relationship information based upon the product selected by an entity of said class.

¹²
~~1~~ 12. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of storing a description of said product.

¹³
~~1~~ 13. The method of claim ¹²~~10~~ wherein said description comprises an image, a textual description, or an image and a textual description.

Sub 17 ¹⁴
12. the steps of:

5

- The method of claim 1 further comprising
- (a) said first entity requesting said first product from said second entity and storing said request,
 - (b) storing a request for said first product by said second entity to said third entity based on the second relationship information retrieved during said step of retrieving said second relationship information.

10

¹⁵
~~13.~~ The method of claim ¹⁴~~12~~ further comprising
15 notifying said third entity of said request.

¹⁶
~~14.~~ The method of claim ¹⁴~~12~~ wherein said requests includes the quantity of said product.

¹⁷
20 ~~15.~~ The method of claim ¹⁴~~12~~ wherein said requests include the shipping destination or destinations
~~of said product.~~

- (a) storing data representing a product available from a first member to a class of customers, said product including typesetting;
- 5 (b) storing data representing an agreement by a second member to provide said product to said first member;
- 10 (c) receiving a customer request from a customer of said class of customers for said product, said customer request including typesetting information describing said typesetting;
- (d) storing said customer request;
- (e) retrieving said agreement based on the identity of said product and said first member associated with said customer request;
- 15 (f) generating a second request that said second member provide said product to said first member, said second request identifying said typesetting information;
- 20 (g) transmitting said second request to said second member.

²⁰ 20. The method of claim ²¹ ~~19~~ wherein said class of customers comprises a single entity.

13
21. The method of claim 19 further comprising
storing data representing an agreement by a third member
to provide said product to said second member; retrieving
said agreement by said third member based on the identity
5 of said product and the identity of said second member.

24
22. The method of claim 21 wherein said
typesetting information comprises an image.

10 15
23. The method of claim 22 further comprising
the steps of receiving a plurality of requests from a
plurality of customers of said class of customers, and
wherein the image associated with one customer request is
different from the image associated with another customer
15 request.

26
24. The method of claim 23 wherein said step
of storing said customer requests from said customers
comprises storing said different images in the same file
20 format.

27
25. The method of claim 24 further comprising
the step of said second member retrieving said image.

28
26. The method of claim 25 further comprising
the step of converting said image from said file format
to a different file format before said step of said
second member retrieving said image.

5
29
27. The method of claim 25 wherein said step
of storing said customer requests from said customers
comprises storing said different images in different file
formats.

10
30
28. The method of claim 29 wherein said
different file formats correspond with file formats used
by said members.

15
31
29. The method of claim 31 further comprising
the step of manufacturing said product.

32
30. The method of claim 31 wherein said
product is a stamp and said typesetting relates to the
20 impression on said stamp.

33
31. The method of claim 31 wherein said
requests identify said typesetting information by
reference to information stored in a database.

34
32. The method of claim 19²¹ wherein said step
of receiving said customer request comprises receiving
said customer request over a global telecommunications
5 network.

35
33. A computer-implemented method of
retrieving information comprising:

- 10 (a) storing first relationship information and second
relationship information, said relationship
information identifying a buyer, a seller and a
first product provided from said seller to said
buyer,
- 15 (b) said first relationship information identifying a
first entity as said buyer, a second entity as
said seller, and a first product as said product,
- 20 (c) said second relationship information identifying
said second entity as said buyer, a third entity
as said seller, and a second product as said
product,
- (d) retrieving said first relationship information,
- (e) retrieving said second relationship information
based on the identity of said seller identified
in said first relationship information.

36
34. A system for storing information about
buyers and sellers of products comprising:

- 5 (a) a database containing a plurality of relationship
records, each said relationship record
identifying a buyer, a seller and a product
provided from said seller to said buyer,
- 10 (b) a processor for retrieving a second relationship
record based on a first relationship record,
whereby said buyer entity identified in said
second relationship record is the same entity as
the seller identified in said second relationship
record, and whereby said product identified in
said second relationship record is related to
15 said product identified in said first
relationship record.

37
35. The system of claim 36 wherein
database is stored at a central location.

20 36. The system of claim 37 wherein said
database is stored in a single server.

39. A system for storing information about relationships between buyers and sellers, said system maintained by an administrator, said system comprising:

(a) data representing an agreement by a middle entity
5 to provide a product to a bottom entity in
exchange for compensation and an agreement by a
top entity to provide a related product to said
middle entity in exchange for compensation, none
of said entities being said administrator, and

10 (b) a processor for utilizing said data to process a request for said product from said bottom entity to said middle entity such that said request generates a request for said product from said middle entity to said top entity.

15

40
38. The system of claim 39 wherein said data
further comprises another agreement by another entity to
provide said product to said top entity.

20 *Dr. K. A. 7* 41 39. A computer-implemented method of
retrieving information relating to a request for
personalized products, said method comprising:

(a) storing an agreement by a second entity to provide a product to a first entity,

00558977-004400

- 5 (b) storing an agreement by a third entity to provide said product to said second entity,
- (c) said first entity requesting said product from said second entity such that the request includes modifying the product in accordance with personalization information provided by said first entity, said personalization information being particular to said first entity, and
- 10 (d) generating a request for said product from said second entity to third entity based on said stored agreements, said request from said second entity to said third entity including said personalization information.

15 ⁴²~~40~~. The method of claim ⁴¹~~39~~ wherein said personalization information comprises an image.

⁴³~~41~~. A computer-implemented method of selling products over the world-wide web, said method comprising:

20 (a) providing a database centrally storing agreements between a plurality of members to sell a product;

(b) sending a web page from a first member to a customer, said web page identifying a product

that is the subject of one of said agreements of
said database;

(c) receiving a request for said product from said customer, said request including an image provided by said customer;

(d) generating a first purchase order from said first member to a second member based on a second agreement stored in said database, said purchase order including said image, and

10 (e) generating a second purchase order from said
second member to a third member based on a third
agreement stored in said database, said purchase
order including said image.

15 44
 ~~42~~. The method of claim ~~41~~⁴³ further comprising
the step of said members storing said agreements by
sending information relating to such agreement to said
database.

20 45 43
43. The method of claim ~~41~~ wherein said
product comprises a stamp having an impression
representing said image.

⁴⁶
~~44~~. The method of claim ⁴³~~41~~ wherein said
product comprises a printed item or sign containing said
image.

5

0956977-094400